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rest those attitudes that are broadly epistemic, those forms of attention whose purpose is to identify or otherwise judge their object. I will reserve "reflection" and its cognates for such epistemic attitudes. In asking *whether* one is ashamed of one's own belief, one reflects on the belief; in *being* ashamed of one's belief, one does not reflect on it.

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! The characterization applies to the concept of belief per se: the concept of belief is the concept of a mental state such that its bearer is in that state only if he is deliberately related to it.

! In making this claim, I aim to describe a concept which I think finds application in our mental lives. How wide is that application? It does not cover everything for which we use the word "belief". For one, the concept applies only to states of creatures capable of reflection, like us, since the characterization is given in terms of kinds of reflective activity. So, I am not talking about the dog's belief that his toy is under the couch. Nor does the concept pertain to every world-representing state of human beings capable of reflection.<sup>5</sup> That said, I do mean it to apply to the very familiar phenomenon of a person's committing to things being thus and so; "belief", here, does not designate an elite sub-category of such commitments.

! This partial characterization of belief has an interesting implication for the nature of belief ascription. If I am right, part of what one knows in grasping the concept of belief is that the bearer of any belief is deliberately related to it. As competent users of the concept, each of us knows that it's true of each of us that he is deliberately related to his beliefs. To apply the concept of belief, then, is to think of the person to whose state one applies it in a certain way. It's to think of him as a deliberative agent with respect to that state. Assuming, indeed, that ascribing a belief to someone consists in applying the relevant concept to his state, then, just in ascribing belief to someone, one takes him to be deliberately related to the state in question. This means that one cannot be said to be ascribing *belief* if one treats it as a further question whether the state-bearer does or can reflect theoretically on the state in question.

## **B!** AN ACCOUNT OF LEARNING BELIEF FROM ASSERTION

! One way to learn a person's belief is from his assertion. In what follows, I set out two variables for any account of this phenomenon. Having explained the variables, I go on to discuss the accounts generated by combining their values.

! The first variable is whether learning a person's belief this way is mediate or immediate. Our question falls under the scope of work on what it is to find out about someone's mind

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<sup>5</sup> It excludes, for instance, fixations and unconscious beliefs.

from his behaviour. Examples include learning someone's grief from his tears, learning he is thirsty from his saying "I'm thirsty", and learning he wants an umbrella from his reaching for one. In our case, a person learns another's belief from a bit of linguistic behaviour--his assertion. In the philosophical literature on these questions, the organizing disagreement is over whether the learning is mediate or immediate. To construe the learning as mediate is to take there to be an

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expressing some state can itself be the object of the knower's experience--if what the knower experiences is someone's expression of his state--then there is no epistemic gap between confronting the relevant behaviour and ascribing the state expressed. Seeing you reach for an umbrella, what I see is the expression of your desire; so, what I see is sufficient for ascribing the desire to you.

! The second consideration for any account of the phenomenon of learning belief from assertion is whether the believer himself figures in such learning and, if so, in what sense.<sup>7</sup> I use the vague formulation of the believer's "figuring" in someone's learning in order to make room for two quite different roles it is possible to imagine a person himself playing in another's acquisition of knowledge: a person himself may be the object of the learner's experience or he may be the source of testimony.

! Let me explain these. Arguably, a person himself can play a role in a learner's acquisition of knowledge--knowledge about him, as it happens--in being the object of the learner's experience. Supposing we can understand experience in a sufficiently wide way, we can distinguish between experiencing facts merely true of a person and experiencing facts he himself





! The second sense in which a person himself can figure in another's learning is to provide testimony. Bringing this idea to bear in our scenario, we're imagining that Updike, in saying "Yes, the American dream is still alive," provides testimony as to his own belief. If Wachtel is to learn



! Supposing that a hearer learns from the expressive character of assertion, then, can we make sense of the believer himself figuring in that learning in the first sense? Having excluded all but one combination of values, we're left with the last one, which is box number 4 on the table.

! And it's a plausible combination. Understanding our phenomenon as one in which the hearer learns from the expressive character of assertion does leave room for the believer himself to figure as the object of the hearer's experience. Provided, as I said, that we can think of experience in sufficiently rich terms, one can be said to confront, in the expressive behaviour of others, psychologically-rich facts.

! Let me explain. Earlier, I distinguished roughly between facts merely true of a person and those he brings about--those constituted by his agency. The first included the colour of a person's eyes and being in pain; the second included having the intention to become a pilot and leaving the room. I floated the idea that both sorts of fact could be available to experience, without trying to say how that might be. Now, with the notion of expression, we have the beginning of an answer to how some psychologically-rich facts can be experienced by an observer.

! Both kinds of fact are subject to expression: a person can hold his head in pain and can announce his intention to become a pilot. If I were giving an account of how a person learns of another's pain from seeing him hold his head a certain way, I would land on box 6 in the table. Such learning is immediate, I'd maintain, involving learning through the expressive character of the behaviour, but the person himself does not figure in the learning in either sense. He neither tells the observer of his state nor is he himself the object of her experience. In our phenomenon, on the other hand, the hearer learns a fact that is, arguably, not merely true of the observed person, like being in pain. In learning Updike's belief, Wachtel learns a fact constituted through his agency.

! At this point, one might ask what distinguishes the expression of facts merely true of a person and facts he brings about. Such a broad question is beyond the scope of this paper. That said, I am claiming that, when a hearer learns a speaker's belief from the expressive character of his assertion, the believer himself figures as the object of her experience. This means I'm committed to the idea that assertion, unlike holding one's head, is a behaviour expressive of a fact constituted through the speaker's agency. It's because such a fact is the object of the





C5) On this explanation, Wachtel's taking Updike to attend deliberately to the state she learns from his assertion is not a manifestation of a feature of knowledge of belief in general. Rather, it's an accident of the way the state is learned. To see what I mean, consider learning regret from apology. A sincere apology, as I noted, shows the apologizer to take himself to have reason to regret whatever he regrets. As I might have gone on to say, then, learning a person's regret from his sincere apology includes thinking of him as in fact attending deliberately to the regret in question. Making a sincere apology involves endorsing one's regret, but a person needn't endorse a regret in order to have it. Unlike belief, the state of regret is not constituted by the agent's standing in any particular reflective relation to it. So, the fact that the state expressed in an apology is one to which the agent attends deliberately is contingent.

! On the alternative explanation I want to reject, Wachtel's thinking of Updike as attending deliberately to the state he expresses might be just like that. She might think of him simply as in fact attending deliberately to his state, and that in virtue of his expressing it through assertion. In other words, this alternative explanation denies the connection I affirmed between Wachtel's taking Updike to in fact attend deliberately to his state and her taking him to be deliberately related to it. It presupposes a conception of belief as logically independent of the believer's own reflective relation to the state, just like regret. Whatever makes a state a belief that *p* is antecedent to the question of how the state-bearer may attend to it. The idea is that a person's assertion partly settles the open and independent question of how he may attend to his state by fixing how he attends to it on a given occasion--the occasion of his expressing it. On this picture, then, Wachtel learns two independent facts: that Updike believes that the American dream is still alive, and that he is attending deliberately to the belief.

! If belief were independent of the believer's reflective relation to it, however, and if, therefore, knowledge of belief did not involve conceiving of the believer as deliberately related to his state, then we'd have the following two frustrated expectations. First, we'd expect there to be ways of learning a person's belief from the believer's paying theoretical attention to it. But there don't seem to be any such ways. When we do learn a person's world-representing state from his paying theoretical attention to it, it's an unconscious belief or a fixation we're finding out about. I'm thinking of a case of a person's reporting that, perhaps despite his actively thinking otherwise, he somehow can't shake the "belief" that his father hates him. Second, we might expect that a person who wants to know another's belief on some matter could and



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## LEARNING BELIEF FROM ASSERTION

A        A PARTIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF BELIEF & AN IMPLIED FEATURE OF KNOWLEDGE OF BELIEF

1. forms of inquiry into one's own mental states:  
theoretical:

## 3. interaction of the two variables

	mediate learning	immediate learning
believer himself figures as object of experience (sense #1)	1. not applicable	4. right combination
believer himself figures as source of testimony (sense #2)	2. not applicable	5. implausible
believer himself does not figure	3. implausible	6. implausible

## C IMPLICATIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE OF BELIEF

1. An aspect of learning a person's state from his assertion is that the hearer thinks of the speaker as attending deliberately to that state.
2. The learner's taking the state she learns through the speaker's assertion to be one to which he attends deliberately is a *manifestation of any belief-ascriber's* conceiving of the person to whom she ascribes belief as deliberately related to his state.
3. That a person who learns the state expressed in an assertion takes the speaker to attend deliberately to that state is *explained* by the fact that the state expressed in assertion is *belief*.
4. methodological question: Why think the details of a particular way of learning belief can support or undermine a thesis about knowledge of belief in general?
  - My claim about knowledge of belief: Knowledge of belief involves conceiving of the believer as deliberately related to his state.
  - Some ways of learning belief involve being confronted with the believer's attending to his own state.
  - So, prediction: Any way of learning a person's belief from some form of attention he brings to it should involve his attending to it *deliberatively*.
5. Alternative explanation of the fact that a person who learns the state expressed in an assertion takes the speaker to attend deliberately to that state:
  - Belief is logically independent of the believer's reflective relation to it.
  - Assertion is a way of attending to one's belief that is deliberative.
  - Thus, any belief *learned through* assertion will be known to be one to which the speaker attends deliberately.
  - This explanation yields two frustrated expectations:
    - There should be ways of learning a person's belief from him that involve his attending *theoretically* to the state.
    - In seeking to know a person's belief, we should be able to appeal to him as a theoretical inquirer into his state.